

Ann Cowper, Petition for a Divorce, Isle of Wight County, 1816

To the Honorable the Speakers and Members of both Houses of the General Assembly of Virginia

The Petition of Ann P. Cowper

A distressed and unfortunate female, who has fallen from prosperity and affluence humbly represents, unto your honorable body, (who she is informed has power to afford her that justice and redress of her grievances, which humanity requires. — She was the only child, of a fond and affectionate parent, the late Col. Josiah Parker, who I hope deserved well of his country, for his life was devoted to her service. He was among the first, who espoused her cause in her greatest difficulty, and danger, and was one of that Convention, who formed our State constitution. he entered the Army, drew his sword, and fought in defence of these rights; he had assisted in her councils — He was one of that little band of heroes, who after retreating through the Jerseys, recrossed the Delaware in the night, and obtained the victory at Trenton; I have always understood he received the sword of the expiring British Commander (Col. Hawley) A few days afterwards, at the same place; when a little Creek separated the American & British Armies; he commanded a party that defended an important pass on the creek — while engaged with the enemy General Mifflin called to him "to defend the pass at every hazard for the safety of America depended on it." — My Father did his duty. He was next day, Field Officer of the day; at the battle of Princeton — and was in most of the important actions which followed, while he remained in the Army. — He retired from the regular service, some time prior to the invasion of Virginia, by Arnold & Cornwallis; during the greater part of this time, he commanded that division of the Militia, which defended the south side of James River. — His military services ceased with the capture of the British Army in York. — When the war was ended, he was appointed to an important office, which he filled, untill the adoption of the Federal Government — he was then chosen by his fellow citizens their Representative in Congress, which he continued to be during the administration, of General Washington and Mr. Adams. — (My fathers merits are not more but I hope they may excite some sympathy for the unfortunate & only offspring of an old soldier.) He then retired from public life to the bosom of his family, wishing to enjoy in his old age; that happiness which arises from the reflection of a life well spent, sweetened by the endearments of my mother, and myself; of whom he was so dotingly fond, that he spared neither trouble or expence, for my improvement or gratification. — Shortly after this in 1802, I married Cap. William Cowper, who had commanded the United States sloop of War Baltimore. — Here commences the sad narrative of my misfortunes. — In a few months after my marriage, the house of John Cowper & Co failed, in which house my husband was a joint partner. he made no exertions for my support, and I was left destitute. — my Father touched with my situation took me again to his house, where he declared he would support me, and divide with me his

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